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SUBJECT: Ahmedinejad in Dakar; Wade Comments on Iran's Civil Nuclear Program

¶11. (SBU) Summary: On November 26, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmedinejad made a twelve-hour stop in Dakar, en route to Teheran from Latin America. President Wade took the opportunity to reiterate his support for Iran's right to a civilian nuclear program while President Ahmedinejad announced that he will help Senegal in the fields of agriculture and energy. Meanwhile, despite the money, T-shirts, and flags deployed by the ruling party to hail the visit, supporters were on the whole too busy buying sheep for the Eid religious feast to come out in large numbers to greet the Iranian President. End summary.

Senegal supports Iran

¶12. (SBU) Addressing the media with President Ahmedinejad, President Wade reiterated his support to Iran saying that, as long as Iran does not enrich uranium for military purposes, Senegal will be on its side. Wade added, "I told Ahmedinejad that Senegal is against the proliferation of nuclear weapons and my position on this is not a secret. I bear witness to the fact the President of Iran has repeatedly told me that his country is processing uranium for civilian purposes." President Wade further noted that IAEA inspectors had not found anything in Iran, musing, "You know, legally, those who level an accusation bear the burden of proof. And in the case of Iran, so far no evidence has been presented."

Iranian Assistance to Senegal

¶13. (SBU) President Ahmedinejad announced that he will continue to support Senegal's effort to develop an automotive industry through the car assembly line that the Iranian company Khodro established in Thies, Senegal. He also promised to deliver one thousand tractors to support President Wade's agricultural program, GOANA. Finally, he indicated that Iran will be involved in the construction of a storage facility for oil products in Senegal. The reality is that there has been many visits back and forth between Teheran and Dakar but little can be shown beyond rhetoric. The car assembly plant in Thies appears to be idle. During the past two years, Iranian vehicles have been imported, not assembled in Senegal, and are currently used as taxis in Dakar. These taxis were lined up along the road as part of the welcome for Ahmedinejad. Realizing the paucity of actual development assistance, President Wade accused former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Cheikh Tidiane Gadio, of having stifled relations with Iran, "Gadio never wanted to go to Teheran." In a joint press release, the two Presidents announced that a bilateral relations committee meeting will be held in Teheran in February 2010 to review and reinforce relations between the two countries.

COMMENT

¶4. (SBU) One of President Wade's diplomatic strategies is to ally with isolated leaders to attract attention from the international community. In the case of Iran, Wade hopes to gain influence and play a role in the freeing of French citizen Francoise Clotilde Reiss from detention in Iran and then be called upon by the Group of Six to help soften Iran's position regarding its nuclear program. Wade still harbors dreams of winning the Nobel Peace Prize as a culmination of his career and to this end he continues to take bold and sometimes obtuse positions with the aim of securing a seat at the table in the resolution of international crises. End comment.

BERNICAT